

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CITY ADOPTS SMART GROWTH STRATEGY

Medicine Hat – Environmentally sensitive, economically viable, community-oriented and sustainable are the cornerstones of the City of Medicine Hat's new Smart Growth strategy.

City Council adopted the strategy July 9 that will concentrate current planning efforts on three broad Smart Growth principles:

1. **Encourage the design of compact, well-designed mixed-use neighbourhoods** - Residents can choose to live, work, shop and play in close proximity. People can easily access daily activities, walkability is encouraged, transit is viable, and local businesses are supported.
2. **Support growth in existing residential communities while fostering unique neighbourhood identities** - Investments in infrastructure (such as roads and schools) are used more efficiently, and in-fill developments within these areas do not consume new land.
3. **Foster alternative transportation options and infrastructure systems that are sustainable** - Green buildings, pedestrian and cyclist routes, as well as other ecologically-sensitive systems can save both money and the environment in the long run.

"Smart Growth was one of Council's main priorities for this term," says Mayor Garth Vallely. "Smart Growth looks at the environmental, economic and social impacts on development and growth. With this strategy now in place, we have a solid foundation for sustainable and viable community growth."

City Administration is tasked with focusing on opportunities to enhance and refine the implementation of Smart Growth principles in the City. The Planning, Building and Development Services Department will establish and implement appropriate development standards as well as an evaluation template for land development proposals that includes social, economic and environmental criteria for sustainability. As part of the implementation strategy, it is anticipated that the Land and Properties Department will bring forward a development project that showcases Smart Growth principles.

A key element of the City's strategy is to engage the public in discussions about Smart Growth principles and how they can be applied in Medicine Hat. One way this will occur is through the public consultation processes that will take place as specific plans like the North Flats and the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plans are presented to the public.

"Through this process, the public will become more informed about the need to build sustainable neighbourhoods, resulting in a broader appreciation of and support for Smart Growth in Medicine Hat," says John Komanchuk, Commissioner of Development and Infrastructure. "Ultimately this will result in a healthier, less polluted environment. The objective is to build communities that use less energy, reduce the use of automobiles, consume less land and other natural resources, create less waste, and provide a more vibrant place to live and work."

A number of key Smart Growth opportunities for the City have been identified, including the "green infrastructure" of the river valley park system, the area redevelopment plans for the Downtown and surrounding inner city neighbourhoods, and the distinct advantage the City has as a major land developer to implement Smart Growth planning policies and develop sustainable communities.

Smart Growth refers to land use, development practices and the efficient use of tax dollars to enhance the quality of life, preserve the natural environment, save money over time by limiting costly urban sprawl, and create more livable, vibrant neighbourhoods.

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